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First Place® AZ Receives \$100,000 Grant from Phoenix IDA Partnership for Autism Housing Models Study

PHOENIX (May 27, 2020) — [First Place® AZ](#), a charitable nonprofit focused on ensuring housing and community options for people with autism and other neurodiversities are as bountiful as they are for anyone else, has received a \$100,000 grant from a partnership comprised of the Phoenix IDA and the Phoenix Community Development & Investment Corporation (PCDIC). The grant will help fund [A Place in the World](#), a housing study being developed in collaboration with the [Autism Housing Network](#), [ASU's Morrison Institute for Public Policy](#) and local, national and international collaborators. Additional funds are being sought.

A Place in the World is a follow-up study to the internationally recognized 2009 report, [Opening Doors: A Discussion of Residential Options for Adults Living with Autism and Related Disorders](#), also designed to inspire, inform and support frameworks for more inclusive, supportive and affordable housing models across the U.S. and around the world.

“First Place is beyond thrilled the Phoenix IDA shares our vision of integrating adults with autism and other neurodiversities into the fabric of communities—everywhere,” says Denise D. Resnik, First Place AZ founder, president and CEO. “*A Place in the World* will enable us to speak the same language among all sectors by defining nomenclature and market segments, identifying public policy priorities and empowering us to advance this new wave of housing and community development, responsively and responsibly,” adds Resnik.

One in 54 U.S. children is on the autism spectrum. Approximately 60,000 children are transitioning to adulthood annually. The first-ever Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study recently estimated that 2.2% of American adults have an autism spectrum condition, equating to 5.4 million people age 18 and older—or about one in 45.

The [First Place Global Leadership Institute](#)'s Daniel Jordan Fiddle Center for Public Policy and the Autism Housing Network have already hosted two international think tanks in Phoenix for the study. Several pressing concerns were identified by [members of the Leadership Advisory Board](#), including the need for marketplace information about demand and economic/societal impact and the data-driven systems that could impact public funding for housing.

A Place in the World brings together various collaborators representing industry professionals and thought leaders.

“Building communities that provide housing for all members of our diverse population is part of the Phoenix IDA and PCDIC’s missions. We are pleased to provide support for such a groundbreaking study, and look forward to its results,” says Juan Salgado, CEO of the Phoenix IDA and PCDIC. “We’re happy to support and fuel their progress.”

The study gets its name from a [2016 PBS NewsHour two-part series](#), “A Place in the World,” featuring First Place and the [Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center](#) (SARRC) and designating Greater Phoenix “the most autism-friendly city in the world.”

This latest grant extends the history of support by the Phoenix IDA for vital capacity-building initiatives for special populations, which began in 2016 with a grant for the [First Place Transition Academy](#). Funding enabled the Phoenix-based nonprofit to develop the innovative life skills program in collaboration with SARRC, demonstrate proof points and pave the way for participants to benefit from public support for what started as a philanthropically and privately funded program.

First Place–Phoenix serves as “home” for Transition Academy participants along with other apartment residents living with autism, Down syndrome and traumatic brain injury. The 81,000-square-foot, \$15.4 million property with 55 apartment units and a capacity for 75–79 residents celebrates neurodiversity and community inclusion. Ushering in a new era of housing options for special populations, First Place is combining these three components to advance more independent and community-integrated living options. The property also includes a sports pool, culinary teaching kitchen, community center and fitness room, and offers residents a suite of supports. Opened in 2018, First Place now serves as home to 60 people.

For more information or to get involved, email info@firstplaceaz.org or visit firstplaceaz.org.

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About First Place® AZ

First Place AZ is a nonprofit charitable organization advancing innovative residential options for adults with autism and other neurodiversities. First Place is creating replicable residential and post-secondary education models that promote collaboration

among the public, private, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors, serving as a catalyst for advancing public policy focused on housing solutions for special populations. First Place celebrates neurodiversity, independent living and the belief that housing options for people with autism and other special abilities should be as bountiful as they are for everyone else. Leasing is ongoing. View PBS NewsHour's two-part series at "[Giving Adults with Autism the Skills to Build Independent Lives](#)" and "[How Phoenix Became the Most Autism-Friendly City in the World.](#)" Learn more at firstplaceaz.org.

About the Autism Housing Network

The [Autism Housing Network](#) (AHN) is a project of the Madison House Autism Foundation that brings together the best ideas on housing for the neurodiverse population. The AHN is an online, national hub of information about housing and support services for individuals with autism and other intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) that strives to inspire, empower and provide technical assistance to the development of local solutions responding to the national housing and support crisis.